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# OBTAINING FOOD: SHOPPING CONSTRAINTS ON THE POOR

## REPORT

OF THE

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUNGER
## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUNGER,
*Washington, DC, November 16, 1987.*

*To Members of the Select Committee on Hunger:*

I commend to your attention the enclosed report "Obtaining Food: Shopping Constraints on the Poor." This report was prepared by the Select Committee on Hunger at the request of Congressman Mike Espy.

This paper is not intended to be a statement of policy by the committee nor does it necessarily represent the views of any committee member. This report is meant to stimulate further discussion of the issues surrounding low-income individuals' attempts to purchase quality foods at competitive prices.

I extend my appreciation to those who participated in this effort for their diligent work on this most important issue, which will assist the Congress in future examination of hunger related issues.

Sincerely,

MICKEY LELAND, *Chairman.*

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## OBTAINING FOOD: SHOPPING CONSTRAINTS ON THE POOR

When the Select Committee on Hunger was established, it was charged with conducting a continuing comprehensive study and review of the problems of domestic hunger and malnutrition. The committee was also mandated to recommend to the appropriate committees of the House any legislation or other action considered necessary with respect to programs and/or policies affecting hunger and malnutrition.

In 1984, the President's Task Force on Food Assistance reported that inadequate access to food is a major factor of hunger: "To many people hunger means not just symptoms that can be diagnosed by a physician, it bespeaks the existence of a social, not medical, problem: a situation in which someone cannot obtain an adequate amount of food, even if the shortage is not prolonged enough to cause health problems."[1] The poor face many obstacles which prevent them from enjoying the same options in the market place as the nonpoor.

The committee, in this report, examines the inadequacy of Federal benefits for supplementing the low-income consumer's budget for food and access to markets where nutritious foods can be purchased at prices within the means of the low-income consumer. In discussing the overall issue of food availability and competitive commodity prices it must be recognized that smaller neighborhood stores are forced to charge more for their goods because of their limited floor space and other economies of scale. (See appendix 1.)

Based on information the committee has received from advocates, citizens, researchers, and service providers, low-income consumers are unable to maximize their limited expendable resources for a basic need—food—because of the barriers of the location and transportation. Hence, the grip of hunger and poverty tightens around the low-income consumer.

Not since 1968, when the late Congressman Benjamin Rosenthal of New York and the House Committee on Government Operations held hearings on "Consumer Problems of the Poor: Supermarket Operations in Low-Income Areas and the Federal Response," has the U.S. House of Representatives studied the barriers to food purchasing faced by low-income consumers.

### LACK OF ADEQUATE BENEFITS TO MEET FAMILY NEEDS

Today, there is an extensive network of Federal income maintenance programs designed to increase resources for the poor; however, even when benefits are combined, the vast majority of beneficiaries remain in poverty, unable to purchase an adequate diet.

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[1] U.S., President, President's Task Force on Food Assistance, January 1984, p. 36.

The Food Stamp Program was created with the intent of supplementing the food purchasing power of low-income persons. Program benefits are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, designed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to specify the quantities of different food types that might be used to provide nutritious diets for household members. In recent years, several evaluations of this food plan have indicated that allowances for food loss, rounding down of benefits to the nearest food dollar, sales taxes on food, and lags in the adjustment of benefits, make the plan an inadequate basis for creating a nutritious diet when a limited budget cannot provide funds for additional food cost.

For more than five decades, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC) has served as the principal Federal cash assistance program for poor children and their caretakers. Program costs are shared by States and the Federal Government, however, States have discretionary authority to determine eligibility criteria and benefit rates. Two-parent families, in 24 States, are ineligible to receive benefits. States in which benefits are provided to two-parent families, the head of the household, or principal wage earner, must be either unemployed or employed for less than 100 hours per month to maintain eligibility. Because States designate grant allotments, maximum AFDC benefits vary widely. As of January 1987, monthly benefits to a single-parent family of three, with no countable income, ranged from $118 in Alabama to $617 in California.

Approximately 80 percent of the families receiving AFDC benefits participate in the Food Stamp Program. Food stamp benefits generally are not considered in determining AFDC eligibility; however, law requires AFDC benefits be counted as income when determining food stamp eligibility. This results in an approximate $0.30 reduction in benefits for almost every dollar of AFDC income.[2]

Between 1970 and 1986, the purchasing power of AFDC benefits has declined by 33 percent. Even when combined, AFDC and food stamp benefits for a four-person family without countable income (in the AFDC median state) dropped from $683 (1983 dollars) in 1971 to $536 in July 1983. This represents a 22-percent reduction. Further, in all but two States—Alaska and New York (Suffolk County)—even with combined maximum AFDC and food stamp benefits, a single-parent family of three remained in poverty.[3]

Benefits provided under the Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI), which provide a minimum income for the aged, the blind, and the disabled, experience a similar offset when interacting with food stamp benefits. In January 1986, the maximum annual potential Federal SSI and food stamp benefits for elderly individuals with no income residing alone totalled $4,656. In contrast, the poverty threshold for such an individual was $5,340.

The difficulties faced by people in poverty trying to manage their resources on declining cash assistance benefits provided through public assistance programs have been compounded by the inflation

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[2] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Ways and Means, Background Material and Data on Program Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, 1987 Edition, pp. 388–550.

[3] Ibid. 1986 Edition, pp. 388–550.

of housing and utility costs. Between 1973 and 1985, costs of these necessities increased by 161.7 percent.[4] With a large portion of available resources channeled toward these and other living expenses, the poor generally have less money available to spend on food. For example, in testimony presented before the Select Committee on Hunger, mothers have stated that their food stamp allotments cannot possibly be stretched to cover food expenses for the full month even with contributions from personal resources.

### FOOD MARKET TRENDS AND CONSUMER CHOICES

"You have this perverse irony that the poorest have to pay more for a basic necessity of life."[5] Research conducted by organizations such as the Maryland Food Committee, the Department of Labor, and the Commission on Religion in Appalachia (CORA) indicates that evidence that the poor have more restricted access to stores than the nonpoor and are often forced to pay a higher price for food. This is particularly true in areas that are largely black or elderly.[6] Stores having a wider variety of goods and more reasonable prices are more often in higher income areas.

Many low-income neighborhoods are predominantly served by smaller independent grocery stores or "mom and pop" type stores, thereby extremely limiting the consumer's choices. Given the nature of the stores in these areas, the shopper is confronted with limited consumption choices which are often, but frequently have to suffice because of the constraints of their living environment.[7] "Because operating costs are so high, small independent store owners claim they try to maintain lower prices by purchasing lower-grade produce."[8] Still, the prices can be 10 to 15 percent higher than those offered by larger, efficient supermarkets. This is due to the fact that these stores are generally independently operated, and are usually unable to maintain a stock that competes with the larger chain firms.

Based on existing research it is fair to say that supermarket chain store affiliation has an important relationship to improved consumption choices for the economically disadvantaged.[9]

Research indicates that store pricing policy adversely affects low-income consumers. However, the grocery distribution system disputes these claims. The supermarket industry has been accused regularly, dating back to the riots of the sixties, that grocery store policies discriminate against low-income consumers, this dispute has never been resolved and there appears to be a need to have representatives of the supermarket industry, Federal, State, local governments, and advocacy organizations work together to find out if there is credence to these allegations, and then take appropriate

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[4] U.S., President, U.S. Council of Economic Advisors, "Economic Report to the President," February 1986.

[5] Jan Houbolt, "Survey on Food Cost In Inner-City Neighborhoods," United Press International, 1984.

[6] Bruce F. Hall, "Neighborhood Differences in Retail Food Stores," Consumer Economics and Housing, NYS College of Human Ecology, Cornell University, 1983.

[7] Ibid.

[8] B. Mahany and C. Drew, "Modern Food Chain has Few Links to Poor," Chicago Tribune, March 27, 1984, p. 1.

[9] Ibid., p. 1.

action, if necessary, to enforce safeguards which will put a halt to these unfair practices.

## SUPERMARKET MIGRATION

During the late 1970's and early 1980's major supermarkets migrated away from the inner cities and low-income areas, toward the suburbs. Major reasons cited for the migration by the food industry include: high insurance rates, employment and security problems, and outmoded and understocked inner-city stores—conditions which keep profits low. The exodus to the suburbs provided cheaper land, better control over operational hazards and, in general, greater profits. According to the Food Marketing Institute, in 1981, 90 percent of the conventional grocery stores, located in low-income neighborhoods, either closed voluntarily or went out of business, did so to relocate into the suburbs. These were the stores that had traditionally served low-income areas. During the same year, over one-half the new stores that opened were super stores locating in the suburbs and other higher-income areas.[10]

As these trends continue, low-income urban and rural consumers are faced with fewer food markets in the immediate vicinity of their homes and the greater expense in accessing reasonably priced foods. This migration has increased the economic drain on the urban and rural low-income consumer's already limited food budget, reducing, and in some cases, removing the opportunity for low-income households to shop competitively.

In Newark, NJ, for example, there were more than a dozen grocery stores that covered the inner-city in 1967, today the people of Newark must travel to larger stores outside their communities. Many inner-city residents are not pleased with this situation, but feel helpless: "I want to know why it's so hard for me to get my shopping done here on Bergen St., so I don't have to pay someone $5 to drive me to Kearny. What it points out—when you are poor, you are totally powerless to control what happens in your neighborhood * * * A supermarket shouldn't be so hard [to find] in a country with so much wealth." [11] Research data substantiates the fact that many low-income families are captive to the stores in their areas. The rural poor have never had access to many stores, thus, they have always faced a sizable disadvantage in pursuing and securing less costly groceries.[12] Many rural residents do not have, or have lost, the ability to grow their own foods, because of the time and expense associated with farming, which exacerbates the problem.

It should be noted that, "* * * food retailing is highly localized and competition for customers is limited to a small geographic area." [13] Therefore, a stores in low-income communities will enjoy

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[10]Food Marketing Institute, "Food Marketing Facts: Productivity," November 1986, pp. 3-4. For information on supermarket migration see R. McFall Lamm, "Prices and Concentration in the Food Retailing Industry," The Journal of Industrial Economics, vol. XXX, No. 1 (September 1981).

[11]"An Inner City Asks for a Supermarket," New York Times, col. 1, January 20, 1987.

[12]David Ambrose, "Retail Grocery Pricing: Inner City, Suburban, and Rural Comparison," Journal of Business, vol. 52, No. 1, (1979), p. 95.

[13]Bruce W. Marion, Willard F. Mueller, et al., "The Price Performance of Leading Food Chains," American Journal of Agricultural Economics, vol. 61, No. 3, (1979), p. 420.

monopoly powers, since migration by supermarkets into low-income areas is uncommon and the residents of these areas have fewer choices of shopping locations. Hence, the consumer who is without an automobile is generally forced to pay more for his food due to the lack of transportation and competition.

### WAREHOUSE SHOPPING

The grocery industry has given birth to a new phenomenon—warehouse food stores—which have begun to compete with traditional supermarkets. Like supermarkets, these stores are seeking locations where the highest profits can be gained. "Warehouse stores turn in the lowest retail price per item at $1.13. Conventional stores typically charged $1.30, supermarkets charged $1.32 per item, and combination stores charged $1.35." [14] Warehouse store reductions may prove to be cost-effective in the long run, to both the rural and urban shopper. Bulk purchase will reduce the higher costs associated with shopping. A consumer will be able to buy more at a lower cost and make fewer trips to the store, hence reducing the amount of time needed to actually go shopping.

### TRANSPORTATION

A 1980 report released by the Economic Research Service of USDA indicated that most low-income households are not located within walking distance of a supermarket. This makes shopping for food a difficult proposition for low-income people because it means they have to find some means of transportation to get them to a grocery store.[15] All consumers must make the decision of whether or not it is an effective use of their time to travel the distance necessary to purchase food at more affordable prices,[16] but it is especially critical for low-income consumers, given their budget constraints. It is often the single most important food-buying decision that these consumers have to make.

To get to these markets, the low-income individual must use transportation, a resource which is not often readily available. Hence, the low-income consumer without a vehicle is often forced to shop either in the immediate vicinity or to procure a means to get to these lower-priced markets. In an effort to attain the lowest cost for food, it is preferable to shop at either a warehouse type grocery store or a large supermarket chain. Once again, these stores are generally not located in low-income urban areas or in rural areas. (See appendix 3 and 4.)

In 1980 the National Food Review, a USDA publication, reported that only 22 percent of the surveyed food stamp recipients drove their own automobiles to the grocery store. About 33 percent stated that they had to walk or take a bus or use a taxi to purchase their groceries. Other means used to receive groceries were delivery serv-

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[14] Food Marketing Institute, Trends, 1987.

[15] Nelson, Paul E., and Zellner, James A., "Store Selection By Food Stamp Households," National Food Review, Summer 1980, p. 24.

[16] Gary Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," the Economic Journal, vol. LXXV, No. 299 (September 1965) pp. 493–517; George Stigler, "The Economics of Information," the Journal of Political Economy, vol. LXIX, No. 3 (June 3, 1963); F.J. Prochaska and R.A. Schrimper, "Opportunity Cost of Time and Other Socioeconomic Effects on Away from Home Consumption," American Journal of Agricultural Economic, vol. 55, pp. 595–603 (1973).

ices or relatives (4.8 and 40.3 percent, respectively). In contrast, families who were not supplementing their food purchasing income with food stamps drove to the grocery store in their own car at a rate of 95.7 percent, according to a USDA publication.[17] Furthermore, according to this survey, none of the nonsubsidized respondents used delivery services, walked, or hired a taxi to do their shopping.

Testimony presented at the Select Committee on Hunger hearing, "Appalachia: Rural Women and the Economics of Hunger," confirmed that a similar problem existed in many rural communities. A resident of central Appalachia explained that living in an isolated community without transportation prevents her from travelling "to town" to shop for food. Consequently, she relies on the local store, which charges substantially higher rates for merchandise than the larger supermarkets in town. Her monthly food stamp allotment is inadequate in supplying her family of three with sufficient food. Fortunately, a garden plot acquired from a local community land trust provides nearly 75 percent of the food on which she and her two sons live.

Even though transportation is a problem and it costs the low-income consumer a greater portion of its expendable resources, 76 percent of the total food stamp redemptions go to supermarkets nationwide.[18] This suggests that the cost of obtaining transportation to shop at a supermarket is preferable to the low-income consumer. (See appendix 5.1–5.10.) Yet, data indicates that the convenience stores also do receive a fair proportion of the low-income's consumers food dollar. Studies such as the Hartford Food Systems Study and the study prepared by the University of the District of Columbia both articulate the obstacles facing the poor in an attempt to purchase foods in an economically competitive environment.

Transportation costs can be a significant part of the cost of shopping—particularly for low-income consumers—and they can negate some, if not all, savings that a consumer could have received by seeking to find food markets which offer more competitive prices.

### HOW THE LOW-INCOME SHOPPER SPENDS FOOD DOLLARS

Research conducted by USDA provides evidence that low-income households spend their food budget dollars more efficiently than higher income households.[19] The lower-income consumer does this by "obtaining more nutrients per dollar's worth of food."[20] Lower-income individuals spend less of their food budget on foods purchased and consumed outside of the home as well as higher costing foods, which increase the probability that the efficiency of the low-

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[17] U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Food Review, 1980.

[18] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "A Study of Prices Charged in Food Stores Located in Low and High Income Areas of Six Large Cities," February 1966; Citizen's Research Education Network, et al., "The Poor Pay More: Shopping in Hartford," February 1984; "Commission on Religion in Appalachia, Report of the Working Group on the Appalachian Economic Crisis to the Commission on Religion in Appalachia," October 15, 1986; The Institute for District Affairs and the Economics Department of the University of the District of Columbia, "City-Wide Retail Food Services Project Report; Technical Studies," May 1982; "Local Supermarkets: A Declining Breed?" New York Times, Style Sec., September 6, 1986, p. 52; Donald Sexton, "Groceries in the Ghetto," (1973).

[19] Benjamin Senauer, Economics and Nutrition, "What is America Eating?," p. 52 (1986).

[20] U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Nationwide Food Consumption Survey," (1977).

income shopper is greater than has been estimated. Consideration must be given to the variability surrounding food prices and store locations as they affect the ability of families with economic constraints to make rational food consumption choices. (See appendix 6.)

The average family has a number of mandatory expenses: the mortgage or rent payments, utilities, automobile maintenance, transportation, insurance, and medical services. If necessary, these expenses can be juggled to meet the demands of the bill collector or the family's desire for a few luxuries.[21] The low-income household is much more prone to budgeting their income in this fashion than the higher-income family, and payments for utilities and any luxury items will most likely come at the expense of purchasing food items. House costs often have the same impact.

According to research conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and university academicians, it has been estimated that the average household purchased and consumed 23 percent of its total food, measured by dollar cost, "away from home" in 1977-78.[22] However, these spending characteristics varied substantially when income levels were compared. The Nationwide Food Consumption Survey (NFCS) indicates a household with an annual income of less than $5,000 purchased and consumed 12 percent of its total money value of food "away from home." Comparatively, households with incomes of $25,000 or more spent 31 percent of their total food dollars on "away from home foods."[23]

The shopping expenditures of consumers by income can further be disaggregated to show the weekly per person cost of food purchased for away from home consumption. The NFCS shows that households with less than $5,000 spend only $1.93 per person on away from home food consumption, while the households with incomes of $25,000 or more spent $8.94 per person—four times as much as the low-income group.[24]

According to USDA, the amount of money spent on food per week that is consumed at home was $15.38 per person for groups whose income was less than $5,000. In contrast, even with their much higher away from home expenditures, the higher-income group spent $19.66 per person on food consumed at home, which is 28 percent higher than the lower-income group. Yet, the food retail industry continues to orient its behavior toward encouraging people to spend more of their food money on food that will be consumed away from home. "By the end of this century, over 50 percent of every food dollar will be away from home * * * so, if we are going to hang onto our share, we are not going only to have to keep our business from going to department stores, we are going to have to win back from McDonalds, Wendy's, Burger King, and

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[21] Progressive Grocer, (1984) p. 55.

[22] U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Food Consumption: Households in the United States, Seasons and Year 1977-78." "Food Away from Home" is defined by USDA as any food and beverage (alcoholic and nonalcoholic) in meals and snacks purchased by the household for themselves and their guests away from home during the week. The expense for such food and beverage includes sales tax and tip.

[23] Ibid. p. 55; Benjamin Senauer, Economics and Nutrition, "What is America Eating?," p. 50 (1986).

[24] Mahoney, "Tomorrow's Supermarket: Here it Comes Ready or Not," Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration News, June 8, 1987.

Kentucky Fried [Chicken], with our own in-store fast food operations." [25] This trend gives little consideration to the consumer who depends most upon the services of supermarkets. Those with the lowest incomes expend approximately 61.5 percent of their weekly budget on food purchases. In contrast, the average consumer spends about 14.7 percent, and the higher-income consumer, 13.6 percent of their weekly budget on food purchases.[26]

The supermarket industry takes these factors into consideration when decisions are made about location, pricing, and general store management.

### COST OF SHOPPING FOR THE LOW-INCOME

Shopping for food impacts on the family budget in a variety of ways. Key factors which have substantial impact in determining what portion of the budget is spent on the expenditure of food include: size of the household; the ages of the household members; the employment status of the wage earners; the total family income; and, the mode of transportation available to the family. (See appendix 3, 7, and 8.)

An additional problem for some families, particularly single-parent families, involves the need for child care. The necessity of child care presents an additional cost to shopping. Households without access to an automobile or convenient public transportation will find it difficult, if not prohibitive, to make major shopping trips to grocery markets not near their immediate neighborhoods.[27] The Select Committee on Hunger has found these obstacles to be very prevalent today, especially as the poor attempt to obtain lower-priced higher quality goods than those offered by the community stores in both rural and urban areas.

### COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY MARKET PROBLEMS

During the select committee hearing in San Francisco, July 23, 1984, to examine the effectivenes and accessibility of antihunger programs, a representative of Public Advocates, Inc.—a nonprofit organization whose mandate is to "remove obstacles preventing low-income people from having access to quality, affordable food" [28]—described the lack of competitively priced food stores in four inner-city areas as the single greatest limitation to food-buying power. According to Public Advocates' research, the resources of low-income persons—which are already greatly restricted—must be spread even further because food in these neighborhoods is "20 to 30 percent higher than at supermarkets." In 1979, Public Advocates submitted an administrative petition to the California State government which sought to alert Federal administrative agencies to this facet of the inner-city food crisis. This petition recommended: (1) the provision of incentives to bring supermarkets

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[25] Ibid.

[26] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service, "Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Food and Nutrition Profiles."

[27] Donald Sexton, "Groceries in the Ghetto," (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1973) p. 51.; Marcus Alexis, George H. Haines Jr., and Leonard S. Simon, "Black Consumer Profiles: Food Purchasing in the Inner City."

[28] Ibid. p. 52, Vines, "Grocery Shopping Can Be Long (and Costly) Chore for Elderly," Knoxville News-Sentinel, October 11, 1981.

back into cities; (2) the development of cooperative markets; (3) the establishment of direct marketing between farmers and consumers; (4) the creation of urban agriculture; and, (5) the formation of joint ventures between established food retailers and community organizations as possibilities for improving the availability of moderately priced food items for inner-city residents. No action has been taken on the petition.

Many communities are experimenting with concepts to bring low-income communities responsive, efficient food systems that would improve the accessibility to quality, yet affordable, foods for the poor.

The Maryland Food Committee, Inc., has taken a lead in helping low-income neighborhoods obtain quality food at reasonable prices by establishing nonprofit, community-managed food stores. The objective of these community economic development ventures is to assist low- and moderate-income communities promote self-reliance by addressing their food related needs from within the community. Many experts have expressed the need for grocery markets in a neighborhood as a positive condition because it gives the community a sense of permanency.[29] The Maryland Food Committee, Inc., believes in integrating the various types of food markets into a network controlled by the community to increase the purchasing power and the economic health of the community. The goal is to develop a working network of between three to five stores in low-income, inner-city areas by 1989.

In Philadelphia, the Food and Agriculture Task Force was developed to investigate the impact of supermarket migration and identify other community food issues. The task force developed a food and agriculture policy which requires the investigation of food-related problems and the implementation of programs to respond to them. Implementation of this policy has led to the development of a model food system in the city's neighborhoods which acts as a conduit for bringing stores, buying clubs, food cooperatives, and community gardens together in an effort to share resources and ideas for expansion. This project has also led to the creation of a new supermarket in one of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhood; and, research has been conducted by Pennsylvania State University on the potential for increasing direct food marketing opportunities between local growers and consumers.

In Massachusetts, the Food and Agriculture Department has created a plan which provides participants in the Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and elderly feeding programs with vouchers redeemable for fresh produce at farmers' markets. This program is being replicated in Connecticut, Iowa, and California.

In Knoxville, TN, the city transportation authority has adopted recommendations to reroute bus lines to facilitate the access of inner-city residents to supermarkets in outlaying areas. The transportation authority also operates a "grocery bus" program, through which elderly and other city residents who have very limited access

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[29] U.S. House, Select Committee on Hunger, "Accessibility and Effectiveness of Antihunger Programs," 98 Cong., 1st sess., 1984, p. 253.

to food stores in their neighborhoods can travel to nearby shopping areas.[30]

In New York City, the Community Food Resource Center, Inc. (CFRC) is trying to access reasonably priced, nutritious food for local residents by developing workable strategies for attracting large retail food stores back to the city. This effort will necessitate the cooperation of the food industry and community based organizations, concerned with the issue of supermarket migration.

In Arlington, VA and in the District of Columbia, the city governments are attempting to devise methods to encourage the establishment of new grocery facilities. Both communities recognize that different residential and office populations may have different grocery shopping requirements; therefore, they are attempting to create tax and zoning incentives that will improve the opportunities for developing food store projects throughout their communities. The city governments are also involved in creating and supporting alternative approaches for meeting the shopping needs of special populations; that is, private home delivery, and transportation programs for the elderly and disabled.

Efforts to assist the low-income consumer come in direct response to the need to improve the availability of food at reasonable prices to the low-income communities. Without these concerted efforts to help the poor consumer receive lower priced, higher quality products at nearby locations, these consumers will continue to be faced with fewer low-cost options for shopping.

## POLICY OPTIONS

Several suggestions have been made for improving the access of low-income households to quality foods at reasonable and competitive prices. However, the committee recognizes that each community is unique and must design approaches which are responsive to the communities needs. The committee presents these options for consideration:

1. A National Blue Ribbon Study Group should be appointed to examine the access of low-income individuals to competitively priced foods at convenient locations and propose recommendations for developing strategies to increase the quality of food in low-income areas through the market system. Upon completion of this research, the group should report its findings to Congress.

2. State and local governments should implement tax breaks and other incentives to encourage small- and medium-sized grocery, and supermarket chains to encourage their expansion and/or relocation in low-income communities.

3. The Federal Government should expand incentives to support the creation of local initiatives designed to improve the access residents of low-income neighborhoods have to quality foods at reasonable prices.

4. The Federal Government should increase funding and improve technical assistance for programs which educate low-income house-

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[30] Conversation with Dixie Petrey, Community Action Committee, Knoxville-Knox County, TN, November 2, 1986; Bailey, Ed. et al., "1986 Annual Report, Food Policy Council of The City of Knoxville, Tennessee."

holds on how they can better use their limited resources to obtain a nutritious and balanced diet.

## CONCLUSIONS

The examination of the access to competitively priced food in low-income areas, strongly indicates that equal access to food at fair and competitive prices, and free market enterprise, are often opposing forces. Therefore, there is much controversy about ways to reduce the problem. Some experts promote greater government intervention is securing equality in the market place for the poor; others recommend that the government have a limited, if any, role in intervening in this market industry. The equity of access to competitive food markets for low-income households in rural and urban America is essential to any efforts working toward eradicating hunger in the United States.

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# APPENDIX 1

## CLASSIFICATION CODES

The development of market types and sales breakdown classifications for this study are based on discussions with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Breakdown of Market Types: 1. Food Buying Cooperatives; 2. All combination stores; 3. Convenience Stores; 4. Medium/Small Grocery Stores; 5. Combined Health/Natural, Specialty, and Procedure Stand stores; 6. Other Firms; 7. Supermarkets;

Sales breakdown for all stores excluding supermarkets: 1. 0–$99,999; 2. $100,000–$249,999; 3. $250,000–$499,999; 4. $500,000–$749,999; 5. $750,000–$999,999; 6. $1,000,000–over $7,000,000.

Breakdown of Supermarket Sales: 1. 0–$99,999; 2. $100,000–$999,999; 3. $1,000,000–$2,499,999; 4. $2,500,000–$4,999,999; 5. $5,000,000–$6,999,999; 6. Over $7,000,000.

*Store definitions*

Grocery store—Any retail store selling a line of dry grocery, canned goods or non-food grocery items plus perishable items.

Supermarket—Any full-line, self-service grocery store with sales volume of $2 million or more annually.

Supermarket-style store—Any self-service grocery store, including meat, dairy and produce departments, with sales volume between $1 and $2 million annually.

Super Store—Complete full-line self-service market operating in a sales area of more than 40,000 square feet with an annual sales volume of at least $8 million and offering an expanded selection of nonfoods. Extensive services and departments are offered.

Convenience store—Compact drive-to-store offering limited line of high-convenience items. Over half sell gasoline and some sort of fast foods. Long hours and easy access.

Other store—Any grocery store with sales volume under $1 million annually.

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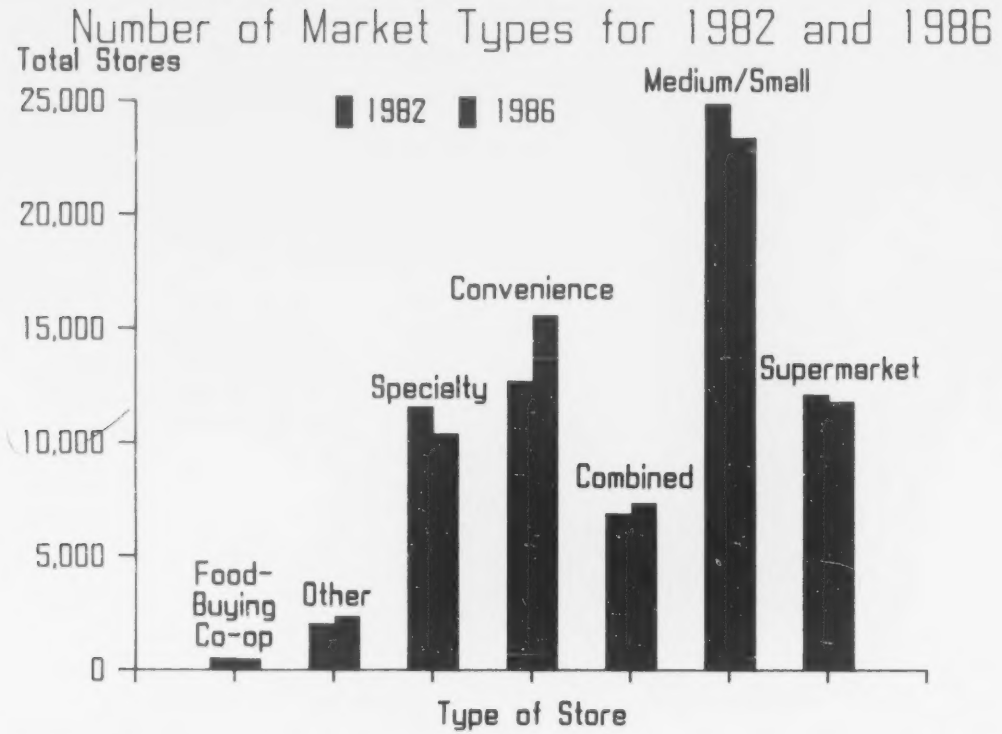
Source for store definitions: Food Marketing Institute.




SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service Unpublished Data.

## Appendix 3

NUMBER OF STORES IN METRO AREA WITH 33 PERCENT OR MORE OF THE POPULATION THAT IS BLACK AND 15 PERCENT OF THAT POPULATION WITHOUT A VEHICLE

| Metro status | Food-buying co-ops | Other firm | Combined HF, SF, PS | Convenience stores | Combined CE, CB, CR, CM, CO | Medium or small size grocery store | Supermarket |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urban population less than 20,000 adjacent to metro | 0 | 2 | 24 | 52 | 126 | 209 | 36 |
| Urban population less than 20,000 not adjacent to metro | 5 | 5 | 30 | 45 | 82 | 187 | 33 |
| Completely rural not adjacent to metro | 0 | 3 | 4 | 28 | 80 | 122 | 17 |

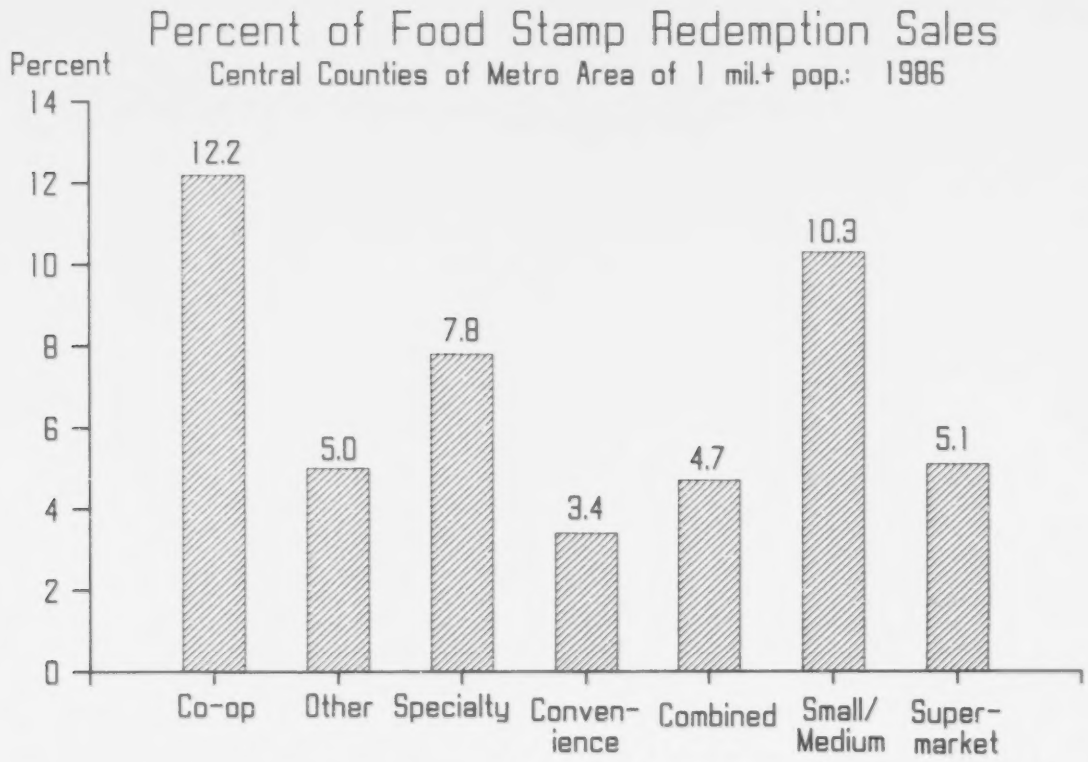
Source: USDA, ERS unpublished data

## Appendix 4

### SALES IN DOLLARS BY METRO FOR POPULATION > 33 PERCENT BLACK PLUS WITH 15 PERCENT OF THAT POPULATION WITHOUT A CAR

| Metro status | Under $50,000 | $50,000 to 99,999 | $100,000 to 249,999 | $250,000 to 499,999 | $500,000 to 749,999 | $750,000 to 999,999 | $1 million to 2,499,999 | $2.5 million to 4,999,999 | $5 million to 6,999,999 | $7 million and over |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urban population less than 20,000 adjacent to metro | 166 | 88 | 88 | 33 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Urban population less than 20,000 not adjacent to metro | 163 | 80 | 101 | 30 | 4 | 5 | 20 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Complete rural not adjacent to metro | 73 | 59 | 45 | 16 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: USDA, ERS unpublished data

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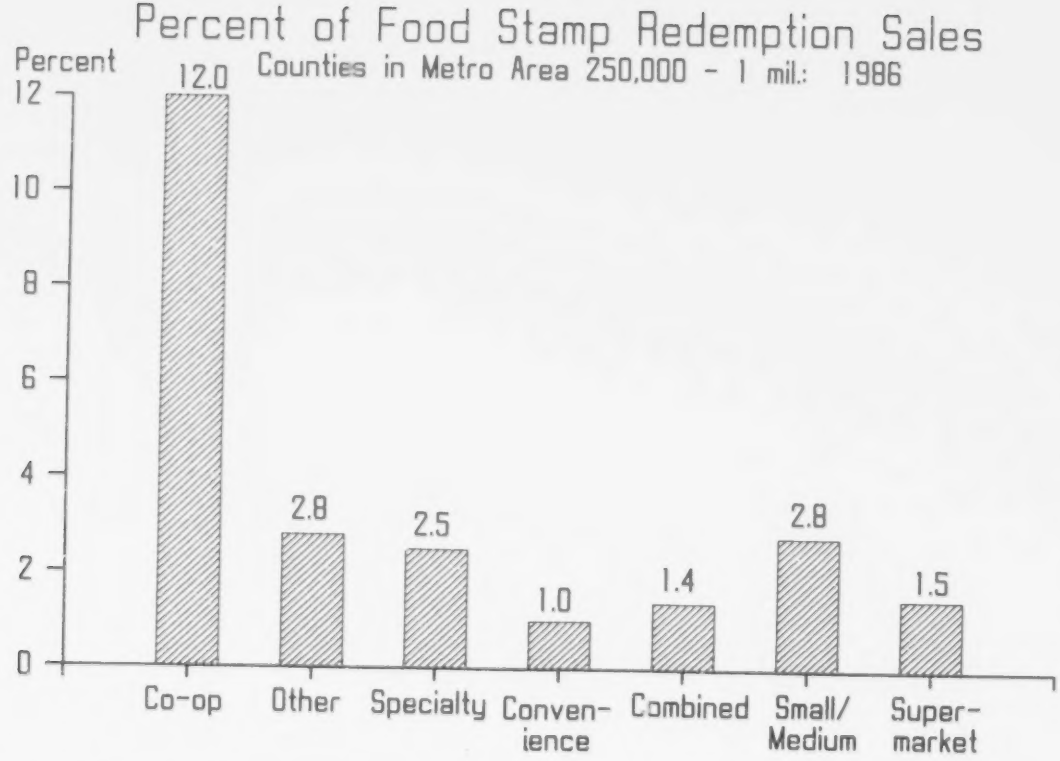


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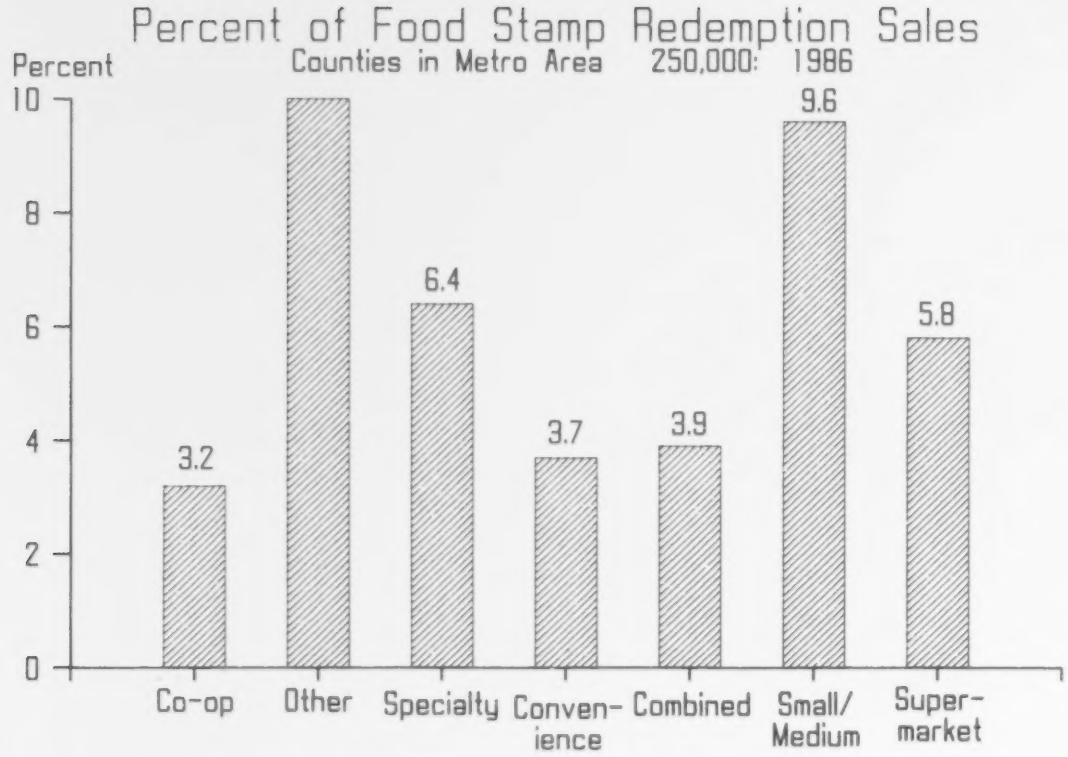


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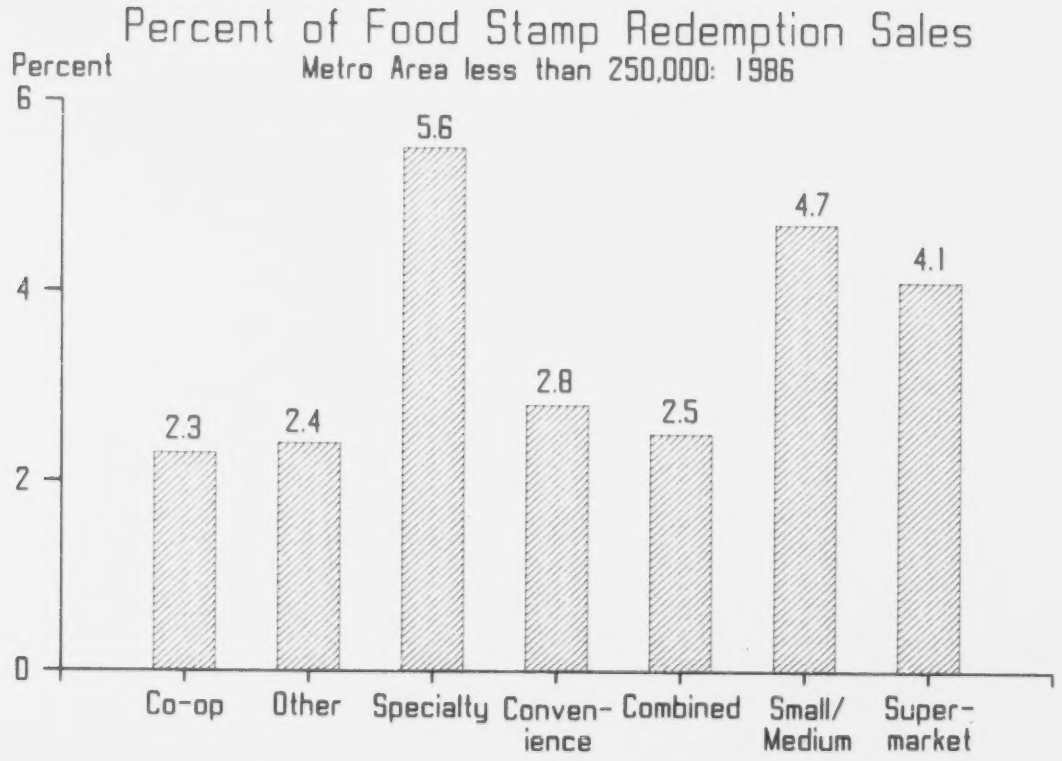


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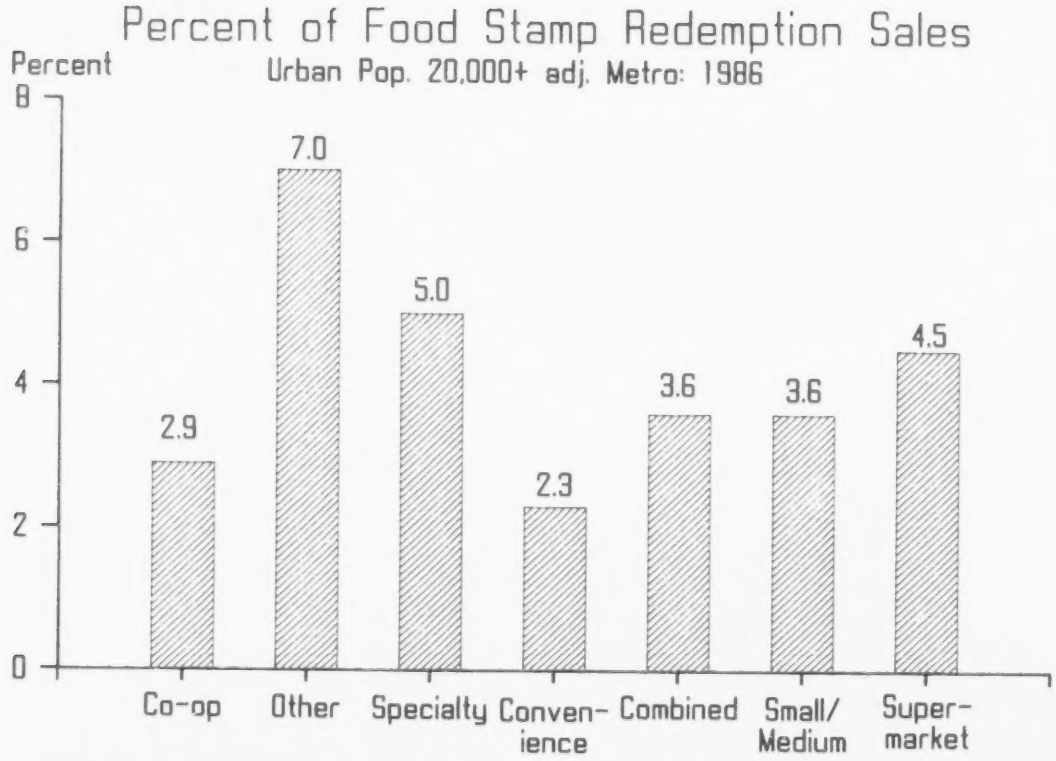


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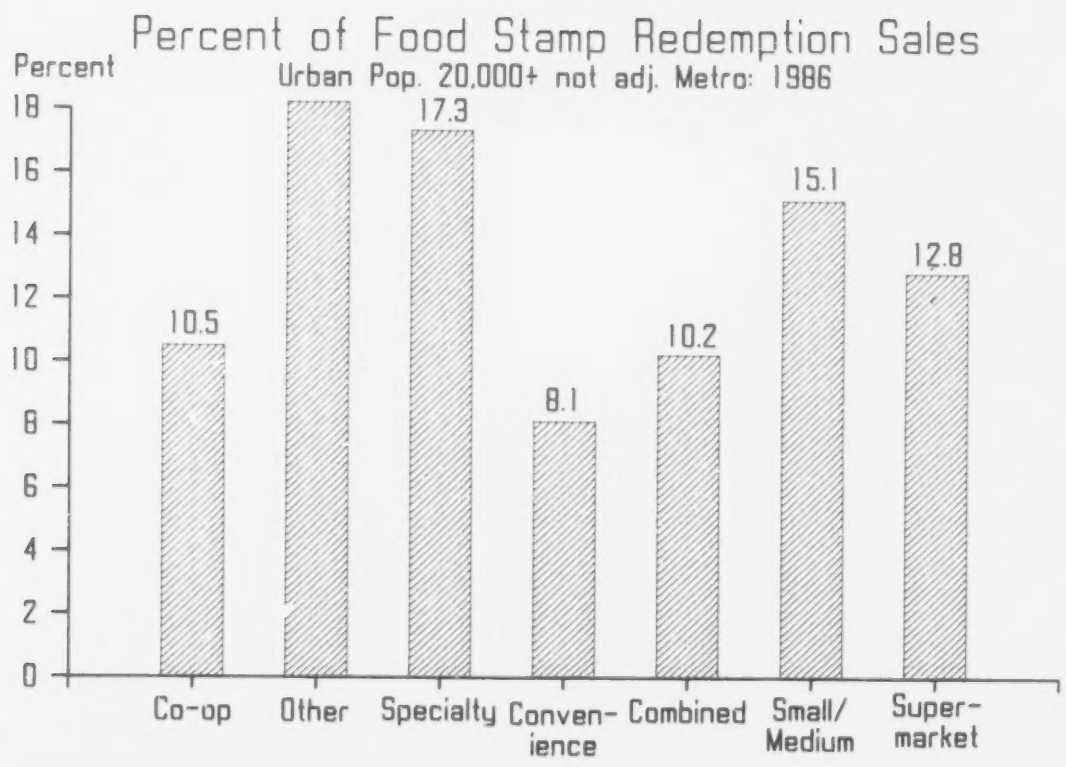
Appendix 5.6




SOURCE: USDA, ERS Unpublished Data.

## APPENDIX 6

### ANNUAL COMPARISON OF FOOD PRICES ACROSS THE NATION

| | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | Number of families below the poverty level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| San Diego | 41.00 | 39.10 | 39.55 | 37.61 | 39.97 | 46.70 | 18,547 |
| Philadelphia | 41.63 | 42.24 | 45.91 | 42.51 | 44.87 | 47.96 | 69,192 |
| Boston | 41.71 | 41.65 | 43.83 | 43.85 | 43.26 | ..... | 48,805 |
| Tampa | 42.10 | 39.92 | 42.51 | 37.07 | 40.47 | 44.64 | 10,489 |
| New York | 42.77 | 43.21 | 54.63 | 52.22 | 55.82 | 49.66 | 304,031 |
| Phoenix | 43.10 | 43.55 | [1] 48.60 | 47.29 | 43.44 | 49.89 | 29,910 |
| Des Moines | 43.13 | 42.07 | 41.70 | 43.53 | ..... | ..... | 3,863 |
| San Francisco | 43.34 | 43.59 | 48.02 | 46.88 | 44.12 | 51.09 | 14,549 |
| Memphis | [1] 43.54 | [1] 44.94 | [1] 45.19 | [1] 46.31 | [1] 45.56 | [1] 52.28 | 28,147 |
| Atlanta | [1] 44.10 | [1] 43.82 | [1] 46.11 | [1] 45.07 | [1] 45.87 | [1] 51.30 | 23,358 |
| Washington, DC | 44.39 | 45.88 | 54.80 | 54.30 | 56.90 | 58.78 | 20,507 |
| Cleveland | 45.18 | ..... | ..... | 46.31 | 45.56 | ..... | ..... |
| Dallas | 46.47 | 45.58 | 46.65 | 47.95 | 50.08 | 48.55 | 57,786 |
| Little Rock | [1] 46.83 | [1] 43.41 | [1] 42.25 | [1] 45.48 | [1] 44.53 | ..... | ..... |
| Salt Lake City | [1] 48.45 | [1] 43.87 | [1] 46.74 | [1] 47.83 | [1] 45.47 | [1] 50.32 | 4,182 |
| Chicago | [1] 49.70 | [1] 44.95 | [1] 47.86 | [1] 40.67 | [1] 45.12 | ..... | 158,099 |
| Seattle | [1] 50.65 | [1] 48.73 | [1] 47.94 | [1] 49.76 | 48.08 | 47.36 | ..... |
| Anchorage | 55.00 | 56.21 | 56.82 | 56.02 | 56.10 | 62.01 | 2,677 |
| Honolulu | 56.72 | [1] 56.33 | [1] 59.10 | [1] 61.45 | 59.64 | [1] 65.83 | 13,405 |
| Detroit | ..... | 43.31 | 47.34 | 46.16 | 46.28 | 51.52 | 93,749 |
| Denver | ..... | [1] 45.64 | 49.39 | 51.06 | 48.12 | ..... | 17,251 |
| Pittsburgh | ..... | 50.76 | 41.92 | 42.76 | 42.37 | 46.98 | 12,424 |

[1] Indicates cities charging food tax.

Source: Food basket prices obtained from the Tampa Tribune's annual comparison of food prices across the country. Cities not specifying food basket prices under certain dates did not participate in the survey during those years. Poverty levels are based on 1980 Census statistics.

## APPENDIX 7

### RURAL-URBAN CONTINUUM CODE 1980

The sampling of counties in this study are classified into the following groupings:

METROPOLITAN COUNTIES

Code

0 Central counties of metropolitan areas of 1 million population or more
1 Fringe counties of metropolitan areas of 1 million population or more
2 Counties in metropolitan areas of 250 thousand to 1 million population
3 Counties in metropolitan areas of less than 250 thousand population

NONMETROPOLITAN COUNTIES

4 Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to metropolitan area
5 Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metropolitan area
6 Urban population of less than 20,000, adjacent to a metropolitan area
7 Urban population of less than 20,000, not adjacent to a metropolitan area
8 Completely rural, adjacent to a metropolitan area
9 Completely rural, not adjacent to a metropolitan area

NOTES.—Metropolitan status is that announced by the Office of Management and Budget in June 1983, when the current population criteria were first applied to results of the 1980 Census. Adjacency was determined by physical boundary adjacency and a finding that at least 2 percent of the employed labor force in the nonmetropolitan county commuted to metropolitan central counties.

Codes prepared in Economic Development Division, Economic Research Service, USDA.

# Appendix 8

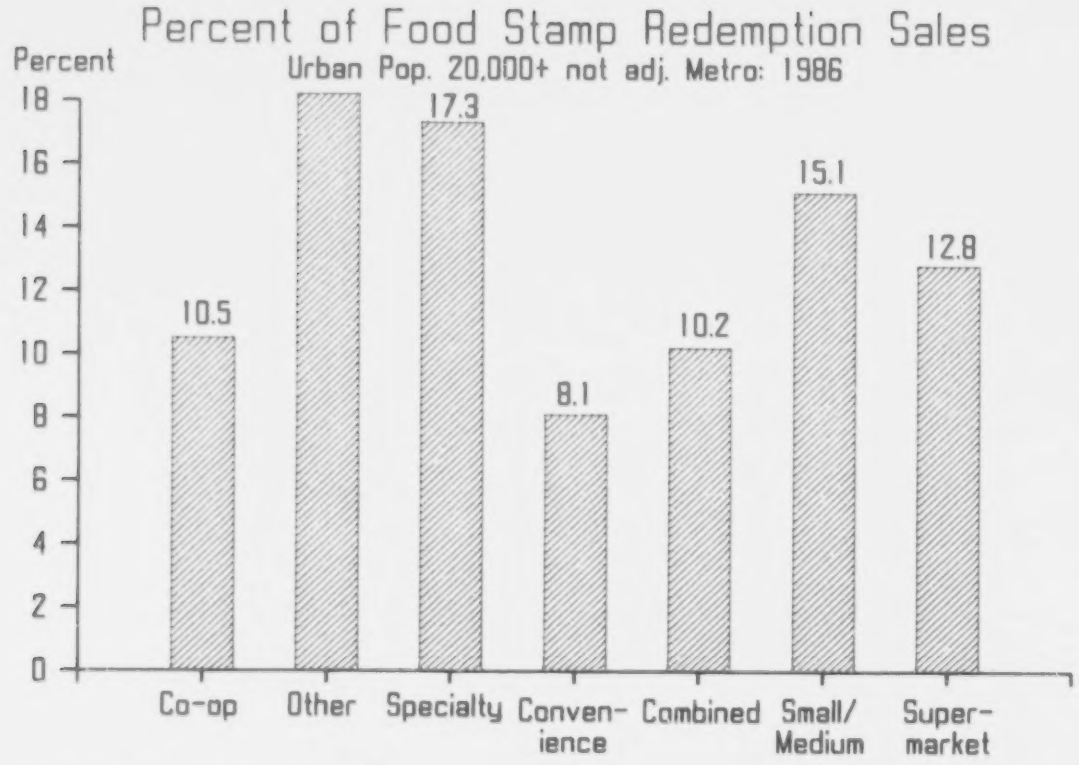
## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS BY METRO (1980)

CHARACTERISTICS

| | Number of households | Percent of households with single female head | Percent civil labor unemployed | Percent population 25 + with high school some college | Percent population black | Percent population white | Total population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 18,922,301 | 7.7 | 6.6 | 49.2 | 19.0 | 72.4 | 50,915,511 |
| 1 | 5,659,089 | 5.2 | 4.8 | 53.7 | 6.2 | 89.3 | 16,424,025 |
| 2 | 4,132,555 | 6.5 | 6.3 | 50.6 | 12.4 | 80.5 | 11,745,342 |
| 3 | 852,952 | 5.8 | 6.1 | 51.8 | 10.5 | 87.0 | 2,494,672 |
| 4 | 301,559 | 5.3 | 6.4 | 46.6 | 7.3 | 91.1 | 861,403 |
| 5 | 173,819 | 7.1 | 8.4 | 42.8 | 22.3 | 67.3 | 543,341 |
| 6 | 391,151 | 5.4 | 6.7 | 40.3 | 17.1 | 81.7 | 1,152,429 |
| 7 | 518,863 | 5.7 | 7.6 | 40.8 | 16.3 | 78.8 | 1,535,739 |
| 8 | 65,645 | 5.6 | 8.6 | 40.1 | 26.5 | 72.7 | 196,700 |
| 9 | 184,030 | 5.3 | 9.4 | 36.4 | 15.0 | 79.7 | 555,378 |

Source: USDA, ERS unpublished data

Appendix 5.7

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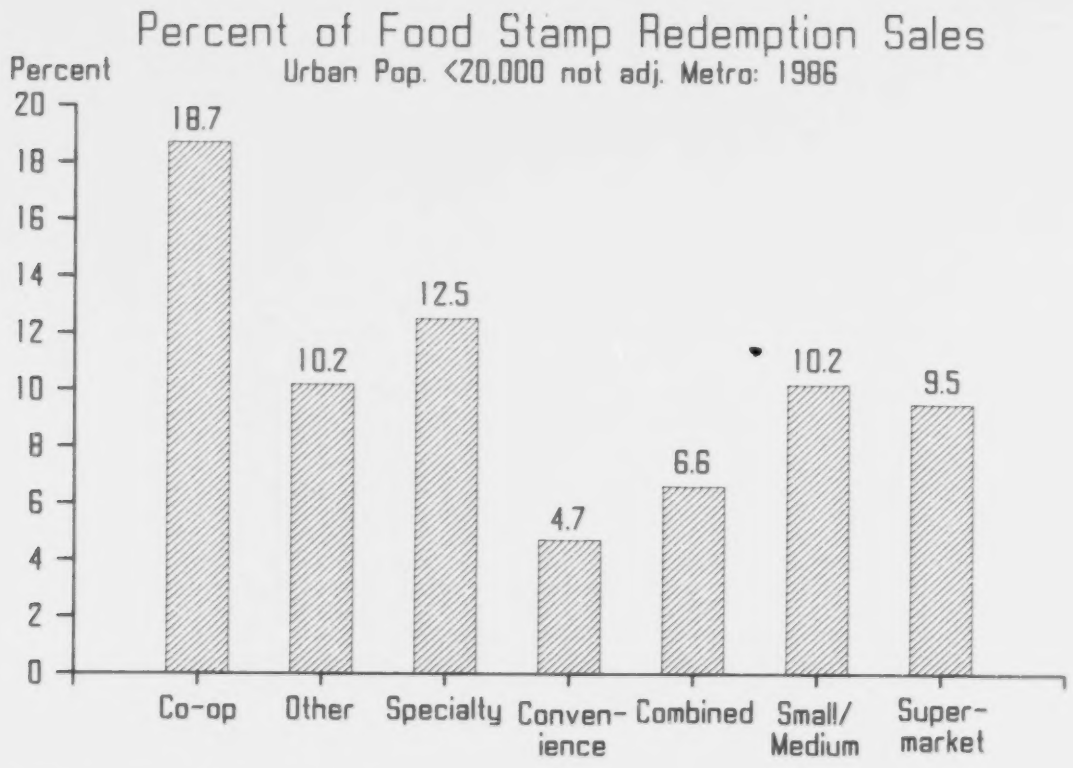


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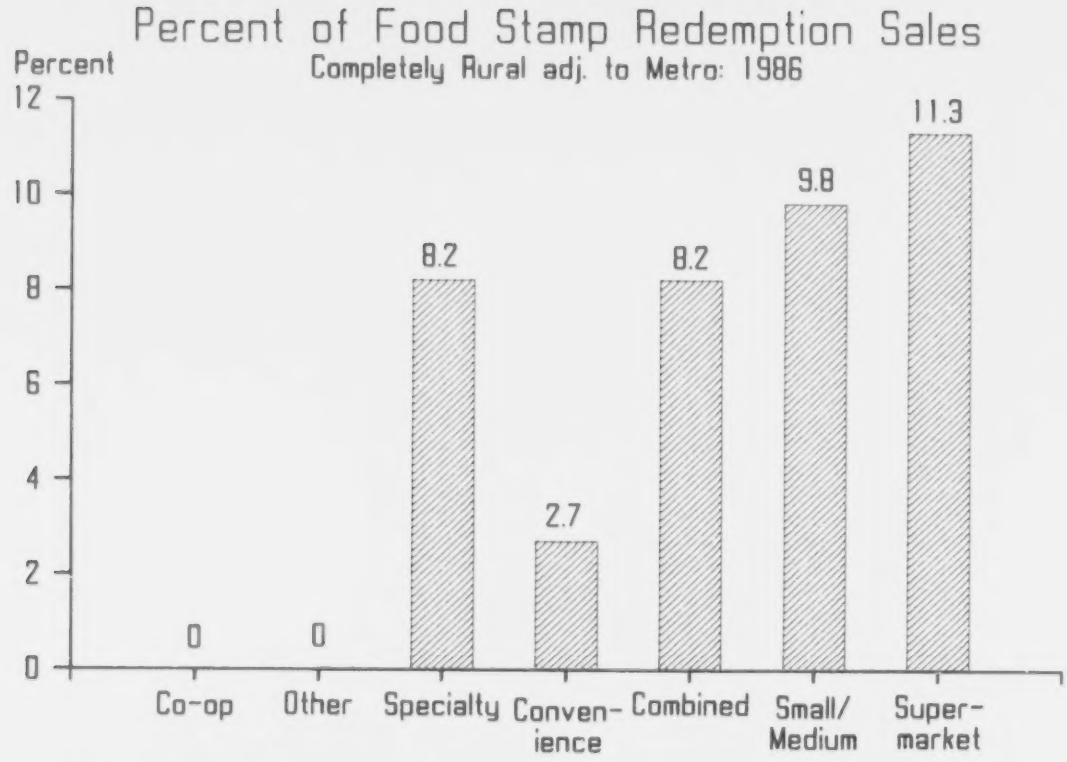


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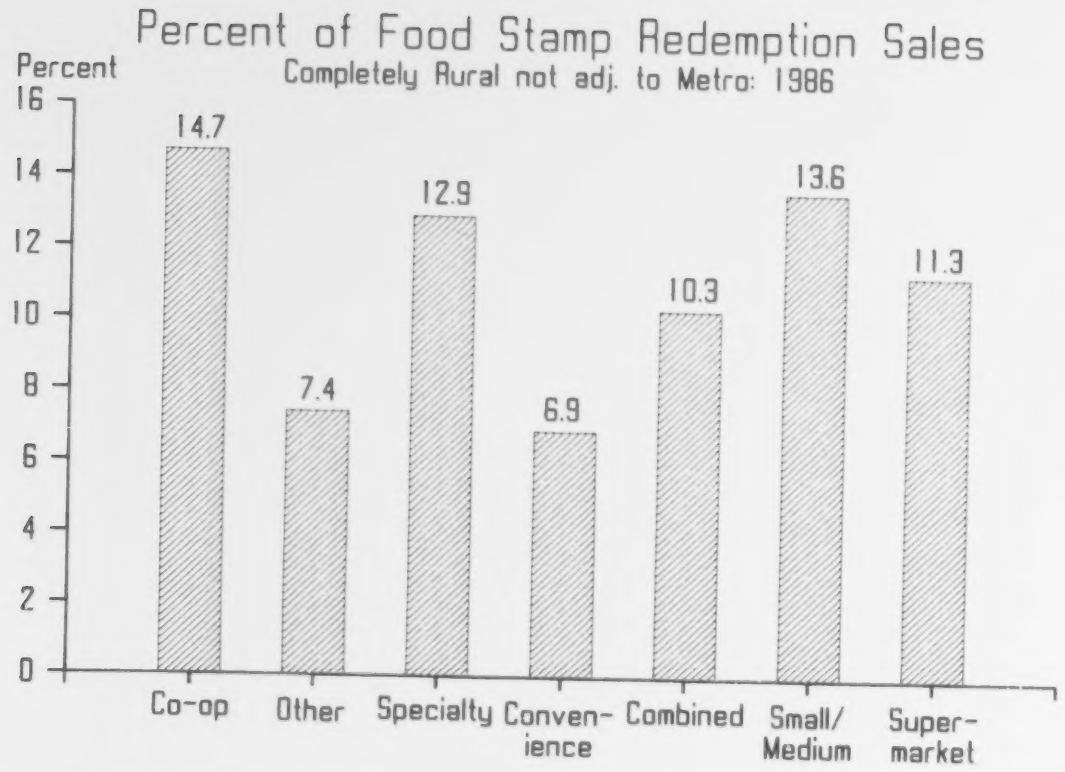


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